

# **TRIBAL ENERGY PROGRAM PEER REVIEW REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

On January 13-14, 2004, the Tribal Energy Program Peer Review was held in Golden, CO. The Peer Review was conducted by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for the purpose of: 1) improving decision-making and program leadership; 2) improving productivity and management; 3) enabling stakeholders to learn about the Program and projects; and 4) providing accountability for the use of public funds.

### **Tribal Energy Team (DOE, NREL, and SNL)**

Thom Sacco, DOE HQ, led the Peer Review with the assistance of Lizana Pierce, DOE Golden Field Office. Roger Taylor, National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), and Sandra Begay-Campbell, Sandia National Laboratories (SNL), presented the role of the laboratories in the program.

### **Peer Review Panel**

The panel members included the following: 1) Dennis Daniels, NativeEdge under U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; 2) David Castillo, Inter-tribal Council of Arizona; 3) Jack Stevens, Bureau of Indian Affairs; 4) Tom Acker, Northern Arizona University; 5) Frank Stewart, Private Industry; and 6) Gary Collins, Mni Sose Water Rights Coalition.

### **Peer Review Scope**

The scope of the peer review was limited to activities since the previous peer review (September 2001) and included program activities FY2002 and FY2003. The program team presented the program scope, organization and budget, the competitive solicitation process, resulting projects, long-term goals and accomplishments. A copy of the presentation material is included in Attachment 3. The panel was encouraged to ask questions and provide verbal feedback and then, document their individual observations relative to the review criteria. The panel met as a group, without program representatives, and developed consensus comments and ratings for each of the four criterion as summarized below. Prior to concluding the review, the peer review panel presented the results of their discussions.

### **Program Overview**

The Tribal Energy Program, which is under the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, promotes tribal energy self-sufficiency and fosters economic development and employment on America's tribal lands through financial and technical assistance to tribes. The program offers financial and technical assistance for renewable energy feasibility studies and shares the cost of developing renewable energy projects on tribal lands. The program also offers assistance to tribes to take the initial steps toward developing renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, including strategic planning, energy options analysis, human capacity building and organizational development.

In 2002, DOE competitively awarded funds for 22 tribal energy projects including 20 feasibility studies and two development projects. In 2003, DOE issued two solicitations that resulted in funding for 16 projects, three development projects, four feasibility studies, and nine first steps projects.

These 38 projects were selecting through DOE's competitive merit review process from a total of 118 applications. Of the 51 applications considered of technical merit and recommended by the review

committee, 75% were funded. An additional seven awards are planned in FY2004, bringing the total awards to 88% of those recommended for award. Of available funds, 91% was awarded directly to tribes to pursue their projects. Funds not provided directly through awards support technical assistance to funded projects and information and education efforts.

These projects represent tribes across the U.S. and Alaska interested in exploring and developing their wind, solar, biomass, hydroelectric, and geothermal resources. The feasibility studies are intended to demonstrate the potential for sustainable renewable energy development on tribal lands. The development projects result from previously conducted feasibility assessments, and are intended to result in hardware installations or lead to commercial projects. The first steps projects are designed to assist tribes in developing long-term strategic energy plans, evaluating energy options, building human capacity, increasing community awareness, and developing organizations to manage renewable energy projects.

Additional information on the program and each of the tribal energy projects is available at [www.eere.energy.gov/tribalenergy](http://www.eere.energy.gov/tribalenergy).

### **Other Accomplishments**

Along with managing the process of soliciting, selecting, and awarding 38 projects, the Tribal Energy team accomplished the following:

- Implemented a comprehensive outreach program, including:
  - Tribal Renewable Energy program website generating over 1,000,000 hits per year
  - Revamped conference display and participated in 27 conferences to discuss and promote the Tribal Energy Program.
  - Produced and distributed 6,000 copies of the TEP program brochure, and 1,000 copies of Sandia's *Solar Way* magazine to Indian Country
  - Developed a comprehensive, web-based Guide to Tribal Energy Development
  - Sponsored four tribal interns at Sandia and NREL.
  - Facilitated intergovernmental working groups.
  - Solicited and obtained significant tribal input to guide overall planning and operations of Tribal Energy Program, through three collaborative strategic planning sessions with the Inter-Tribal Energy Network (ITEN).
  - Trained two tribal community college professors at a week-long intensive renewable energy training seminar.
- Formalized laboratory support network to provide technical assistance to tribal energy projects.
- Made on-site technical assistance visits, and conducted phone consultations, with tribes involved in current and prior year ongoing projects, and to tribes that are considering developing renewable energy.
- Provided technical advice, technology and resource information, siting support, design review, special studies, models, tools, and financial calculators, and strategic planning assistance.
- Coordinated development and distribution of high-resolution renewable energy resource maps, including wind maps specific to tribal colleges and universities

In 2004, the Tribal Energy Program plans to:

- Sponsor and support ten (10) regional tribal energy strategic planning workshops in collaboration with the Council for Energy Resource Tribes and cooperating regional tribal organizations.
- Host a week-long Teach-the-Teachers Renewable Energy Workshop for Tribal College and University instructors and interested tribal representatives (July 2004)
- Award seven feasibility study projects selected from the FY 2003 solicitation.
- Award three FY2004 Congressionally earmarked agreements.

## Peer Review Results

The results of the Peer Review were impacted by the following factors:

- The relatively brief period of the program limited the ability of the panel to assess effectiveness in meeting stated goals.
- The amount of discretionary funding available limited the effectiveness of the program and is perceived as a detriment to the long-term efficacy of the program.

As influenced by the factors above, the ratings for the five key Program review criteria were as follows:

Criteria Factor	Rating
Appropriateness of the Program Scope and Objectives Relative to Available Resources	Good
Effectiveness in Meeting the Stated Goals Within Available Resources	Good
Adequacy of Reaching the Intended Audience	Superior
Quality of the Competitive Process	Good

The following reflects key comments of the Peer Review Panel:

- The intent of the program may not be achievable with the limited resources. Funding levels available for the solicitations are grossly inadequate.
- The lack of long-term strategic planning and sustained funding were perceived as deficiencies.
- The overall program goal of “promoting energy self-sufficiency” is considered too broad given the available resources and may not be adequately focused to allow measurement of accomplishments. The development of metrics to measure progress towards Tribal energy self-sufficiency and economic development is recommended.
- The lack of coordination within DOE and collaboration with other programs was identified as an area for improvement, indicating the narrow scope of the program and inability to broaden efforts beyond renewable energy.
- Leveraging funding and augmenting resources from other sources was commended, yet the uncertainty of future resources to sustain on-going tribal efforts was recognized.
- Integration of Indian energy issues within DOE, beyond renewable energy, was identified as a major concern. Need for holistic energy support and assistance (i.e., EERE and fossil) cited.
- Proposal preparation support was identified as an area not adequately addressed.
- The competitive process was perceived as a fair and equitable process that was being eroded by earmarked funding, thereby reducing competition. The competitive process is complex and “bias” is NOT apparent, fairness is evident.
- The actions by Congress providing direct earmarks dramatically undercuts any efforts of maintaining a competitive award process, and unless this is dramatically changed in the very near future, any competitive award process will, at best, be ineffective, and at worse non-existent.
- More robust support from Congress, EERE and DOE generally to surpass meeting stated goals is warranted given the severe unmet needs in Indian Country.
- A strong evaluation component to demonstrate need and request increased funding is lacking, which may prove detrimental in the long-term efficacy of the program.

The review panel was also requested to provide recommendations for future activities, which resulted in the following consensus comments:

To EERE:

- Recommend that Assistant Secretary Garman address the issue of competitive application process, as distinguished from the detrimental nature of earmarks. Earmarks may cause the program to lose full-time technical support, and funding for the projects. Earmarks diminish the momentum and undercut long-term planning.
- The mission of the Tribal Energy Program is a huge undertaking. Maybe refocusing is needed, if budget remains the same.
- Relative to the vision of having tribes becoming energy self-sufficient, some metrics need to be defined and a long-term plan formulated to achieve those goals.

To Department overall:

- Need to focus on an internal process to coordinate department-wide efforts.
- If an Indian energy office is established, the Tribal Energy Program needs to help guide its development. Develop a strategy in event legislation passes.
- Recommend to Secretary Abraham that a tribal energy liaison position be established within his office.
- Need to broadly address issues (different programs have different views of Indian development).
- Need to coordinate and collaborate with other U.S. Government agencies in general, and to address the earmark issue.
- The Tribal Energy Program needs to continue its efforts to consult with tribes on a government-to-government basis.

Comments:

- This program helps meet DOE's and EERE's federal trust responsibility. It needs to be supported, not diminished.
- Does the administration view earmarks as a way to outsource? There is no public accountability.
- Separation of power within government. We have more confidence in oversight of project funding in the public domain through the competitive process, than with earmarks.
- Congressional staff may not have sufficient technical insight. There needs to be accountability in the process of expending public funds.
- Need to increase total amount in budget, not just reduce earmarks. Need to identify the unmet need this program addresses, and take it up the chain. Need to protect the investment made so far and protect the tribal confidence in the program.
- Energy self-sufficiency means different things to different tribes. Some tribes may be content to purchase electricity and some may not have energy resources. How do we address the needs of those tribes?
- Maybe energy self-determination is a better way to phrase.

<p>The Committee unanimously offered their expertise as a on-going resource to the program</p>
--